

**RESEARCH PAPER****Baloch Ethnic Nationalism: A Threat to National Integration of Pakistan****Dr. Gulshan Majeed**

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**Corresponding Author** gulshan.polsc@pu.edu.pk**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this paper is to highlight actual grievances of Baloch ethnicity and responses by authorities. This paper has explained about nationalistic tendencies among Baloch people. Pakistan's society is plural with different religious, linguistic and regional identities. One of the serious challenges that Pakistan has been facing since 1947, is the self-assertion of various ethnic identities in a hostile way which has been posing a threat to the integrity of state. Baloch nationalism has been posing a major threat to the national integration of Pakistan through various insurgent movements on different occasions of history of Pakistan. Researcher had used descriptive analytical research method to conduct this research and secondary sources have been used to collect data. Researcher did highlight consequences if needs of Baloch people are not being met by the political system. Sense of belongingness towards system should be created among Baloch to enhance national integration In Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Ethnic Nationalism, Ethnocentrism, Grievances, Integration**Introduction**

Balochistan is a largest province of Pakistan with smallest population. Baloch ethnic identity can also be identified in Iran and Afghanistan. Balochistan constitutes about 43% of the country's territory. Balochistan is a Province of different ethnicities, who have various cultures and languages to express themselves. One can find Baloch, Pashtuns, Brahui, Lassis, Dehwaris, Hazaras, Sindhi and Punjabis in the province of Balochistan. These ethnicities live side by side without intermingling with each other and they do not come into conflict with each other until and unless they are triggered to do so. Balochistan is a backward province with abundant of natural resources. Various governments of Pakistan have remained unable to utilize and distribute natural resources among different ethnicities of Pakistan. Baloch people with gradual passage of time have developed sense of deprivation, they feel their resources are being used intentionally or unintentionally for the development of different other regions of Pakistan instead to develop Balochistan (Muzaffar, et. al., 2018; Noraiee, 2020).

Balochistan is a province with dominant tribal structure. Baloch people love their land and one can see during colonial domination in Sub Continent Baloch did resist against this domination and they had launched various nationalist movements to get rid from colonial masters. General Secretary Abdul Aziz kurd of Anjuman-e- Ittehad-e- Balochan expressed in 1932 in the Zamindar magazine about a separate Balochistan in India and in 1937 kalat State National Party (KSNP) was established. This party also did support to have a separate status of Baloch people. (Breseeg, 2004). Sense of deprivation has given birth a strong sense of Baloch nationalism among people of Balochistan. One can observe a number of differences among baloch people but whenever there is any external challenge they will unite and give a tough time to external forces. People of Balochistan were not happy with the imposition of One Unit System from 1955-1969. Baloch national movements were

developed because people of Balochistan wanted to have power to resolve their actual issues. They were not happy with the policies of central government of Pakistan. Balochistan is situated on a sensitive geographical location. After independence foreign elements have been involved in the indigenous movement of Baloch. The involvement of external actors is highly harmful for the integrity of Pakistan. This is need of the time to address the real issues of the people of Balochistan so that Pakistan can be strengthened and prosper (Muzaffar, et. al., 2021).

### **Literature Review**

Writer explains in detail about the emergence of ethnic nationalism in Pakistan and self-assertion by various ethnic identities of Pakistan. He has discussed in detail different nationalist movements in various parts of the world. He has also identified the importance of state system with special reference of nationalism. Author has highlighted pre-colonial state system in India and state system during colonial era and different changes which were made by colonial rulers. Author has explained in an organized way the state system of Pakistan. Political system of Pakistan remained unable to satisfy different ethnic identities. Author has delineated Baloch, Pakhtun, sindhi and Mohajir ethnic movements in Pakistan. How and in what way leaders of these regions intentionally or unintentionally have been creating the feelings of regionalism which are harmful for the integration of Pakistan (Khan, 1999).

Writer has discussed in detail the concept of nation and nationalism. The author has talked about various insurgencies which were launched by the Baloch nationalist for securing their specific objectives during various periods of Pakistan history. The writer has explained comprehensively the causes and consequences of armed resistance of year 2005 including the social, economic, political and cultural factors which were working behind this severe this armed resistance. The author has also given various recommendations for improving relationship between federal government and Baloch nationalists (Malik, 2013).

The author has emphasized in detail that Baloch nationality working with a specific level of developed national consciousness and they have their own peculiar characteristics which are giving birth to the sense of oneness among them. Baloch are more concerned to protect their core identity and they want to resolve their issues themselves. They have awareness about the available mineral resources and energy resources in their region. They demand to federal government to utilize these resources in the best interests of Baloch people. Author has critically evaluated situation of Balochistan in 1970s. He has discussed in detail the coercive methods which were adopted by the federal government to suppress the Baloch insurgency. The involvement of external actors has been identified (Breseeg, 2004).

Writer has described the nature of the societies of these three countries. These three countries having multi-ethnic societies and many of ethnic groups are trans-border people. In Pakistan Punjabi ethnic group constitute some 55 percent of total population. Punjabis are dominating political sphere of state and influential in military and bureaucratic institutions. Balochi, Sindhis and Pakhtuns are major minority groups in Pakistan. Urdu speaking also playing very important role in the politics of state (Banuazizi, et. al 1987).

Author has discussed about ethno-nationalist and secessionist movements in postcolonial states of South and South East Asia. It has been observed that most of the post colonial states had tried to create uniform national identity by ignoring the importance of various sub-identities. Political leadership of these states promoted centralized power state structure to secure political stability and territorial integrity. Ethnic minorities felt themselves insecure under this centralized power structure and started to strengthen their core identity by taking various measures and these efforts sometimes confronted with the

efforts of national integrity. Sometimes ethnic group may form a specific majority in a state and after facing sense of deprivation, demand for autonomy (Ganguly, 2013).

The author in his book has elaborated the scope and significance of ethnic pluralism and nature of ethnic conflicts. Author has discussed about the concept of ethnicity, ethnic conflict and ethnic solidarity. Various methods have been highlighted by the author which ethnic identities adopt either peaceful or coercive for the protection of their specific interests. How and in what way ethnic identities come into conflicting situation and the policies of the government to counter conflicting situation (Esman, 2004).

The author has discussed various conflicting situations in the region of South Asia. Different alternative approaches and techniques to resolve conflicts have been discussed in the book. Why do ethnic identities come into conflict and what strategies should be adopted and implemented by the government to deescalate the conflicting situation (Ahmar, 2005).

Writer has discussed various phases of politics of Pakistan. Structural evaluation of the state in Pakistan has been discussed in detail by the author of the book. Political leadership and political parties of Pakistan have been evaluated in the book. Different issues such as legitimacy and rule of law have been explained in the book. The role of military and bureaucratic institutions has been highlighted in the book (Waseem, 2007).

### **Hypothesis**

Pakistani society is heterogeneous society with different ethnic identities. Ethnic nationalism works for the betterment of a specific community. The contribution of Baloch ethnic identity can be positive in the state administrative structure but only when their actual grievances are being addressed properly and they are given their due share in decision making process. Federal government should initiate various strategies to socialize Baloch people and a sense of belongingness towards system should be inculcated in the minds of Baloch so they can feel that they are part of main stream and they enjoy authority to resolve their issues by themselves. If they are not being taken into confidence by the federal government they will play in the hands of external actors and pose a threat to the integrity of Pakistan.

### **Material and Methods**

Research methodology is perceived a significant tool to conduct appropriate and precise research on any issue. Researcher has applied qualitative approach to analyze the given issue and used secondary sources to collect data.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Historical Background of Baloch ethnic nationalism**

British Government in Balochistan strengthened its influence through various phases. British government had this ideal very well that they would not be able to maintain direct physical control on Balochistan. Britishers imposed indirect rule through Sandeman system. British government through this system did control only tribal chiefs of Balochistan. Sardars along with Agent to the Governor General were responsible to initiate and manage various developmental and administrative affairs of Balochistan (Khan, & Muhammad, 2018)

Sardars under Sandeman System were given authority to organize their own force to maintain law and order situation. Sardars did organize levies force to maintain peace. Sardars were given money and weapons to establish their authority in their respective regions.

Though British government was controlling Balochistan through indirect rule but anti-British sentiments could not be controlled by the Britishers. Indigenous population of Balochistan generally few sardars who were not happy with the policies of British government and particularly middle class Baloch were not happy with the alien rule. Baloch ethnic nationalism was very dominant under British control. British government did introduce different industrial advancements such as post offices, rest houses, railway lines and cantonments for troops but could not introduce political and social reforms for the well being of local population. Baloch society though was not organized politically and socially but they had strong sense of nationalism to counter British domination. The Young Baloch was considered the first nationalist movement. This movement wanted to see element of unity among different segments of Baloch society because they knew well that through unity they would be able to win from dominant enemy. (Khan, & Muhammad, 2018)

Baloch nationalism is not a result of industrial social formation rather a creation of tribal set-up. After partition centralized policies of federal government became a source to turn Baloch nationalism into a potent force. This force launched in 1970s guerrilla war that escalated into violent conflicting situation between Baloch insurgents and Pakistan Army. Since 1947 Baloch have been trying to have their due share in the existing state power structure but their grievances have not been properly addressed by the provincial as well as central government. Baloch nationalist movement is based on ethnic identity and working for the interests of the people of Balochistan. British colonialists constructed railway lines, post offices, rest houses, roads and cantonment areas for British troops. (Breseeg, 2004: 213, 221) With these constructions neglected region of Balochistan saw some economic changes but most of these changes preserved the interests of settlers and not the interests of local Baloch population. Cattle breeding used to play an important role in the lives of Baloch during British era and same situation one can observe after partition. After independence Baloch population remained victim of this neglect by the federal government of Pakistan. Baloch people had been treated by federal government of Pakistan on same lines as they used to be treated by British colonial regime. Ordinary Baloch were unable to fulfill their basic necessities of life even after independence of Pakistan. Sardars had privileged status during British government and after partition of Sub-Continent they became successful to maintain their privileged status in Pakistan.

### **Significance of Balochistan**

Geo-strategic position of Balochistan is very important for international actors. Balochistan coast has significant position for Pakistan. Coast of Balochistan has two naval bases such as Ormara and Gwadar. Gwadar Port has potential to provide a number of various facilities to different countries of the world. Balochistan has different natural resources such as mineral and energy resources which can improve economic situation of Pakistan. Since 1947 to 2005 Balochistan had faced different forms of insurgencies, which had widened already existing gulf between Baloch people and federal government. Balochistan had been given the status of province after 23 years of Pakistan creation and as a result of first general elections of Pakistan in 1970s people of Balochistan became successful to form their own government in the province. It was a sigh of relief for Baloch people to have their own government. They thought now they would be able to control and administer the affairs of province according to their own needs. The government of Balochistan introduced various reforms for the well being of people of Balochistan but these reforms were not according to the expectations of federal government of Pakistan. This attitude of the then federal government created mistrust between central government and Balochistan government. Baloch people in general and Baloch nationalists started to feel themselves as aliens in the existing system of Pakistan. Federal government remained unable to take them into confidence and did not have idea about the sensitivity of prevailing circumstances in Balochistan. Baloch people started to have a sense of deprivation regarding utilization of their natural resources by federal government not in the interest of

people of Balochistan but for the well being of people of other parts of Pakistan. For example, the people of Balochistan did not have gas facilities which were being extracted from Balochistan but they were provided to people of other provinces of Pakistan. The federal government did not pay attention to address actual grievances of the people of Balochistan through initiating various developmental projects in Balochistan. The federal government wanted to dominate internal affairs of Balochistan in one way or the other way and the government of Balochistan wanted to use regional authority for the well being of people of Balochistan and wanted to see Baloch people to work on various administrative posts instead of non-Baloch because it was the point of view of Balochistan government that Baloch can realize in the true sense the issues of indigenous population and can formulate policies in the best interests of people of Balochistan. The federal government through intervening in the affairs of Balochistan strengthened centralized and authoritarian structure, which gave air to nationalistic tendencies in the province of Balochistan (Ahmed, 1999:172).

Federal government under Bhutto leadership did realize internal differences among sardars of Balochistan and took advantage of the situation and dissolved the government of NAP and consequence of this dissolution was armed resistance in Balochistan. Pakistan military initiated a counter-insurgency operation with the help of Iran. Baloch leaders such as Khair Bux Mari, Attaullah Mengal and Ghaus Bux Beizenjo supported this armed struggle against Pakistan army. This confrontation in Balochistan created a wider gap and mistrust between youth, nationalists and Pakistan. Nationalists had faced sedition charges by federal government. Organizations such as BSO (Baloch Students Organization) and BPLF (Balochistan People's Liberation Front) started to have more negative feelings about Pakistan which was harmful for integration of Pakistan. After Bhutto General Zia came into power through imposing martial law in 1977. Zia adopted a different policy to deal with the nationalistic tendencies in Balochistan. He did withdraw Hyderabad conspiracy case against NAP leaders and also granted general amnesty to Baloch militants (Ahmed, 1999:176). General Zia became successful to buy the loyalties of different Baloch leaders. Because of Afghan war internal situation of Balochistan was not so much stable and federal government got an opportunity to suppress all those segments of Balochistan who were having any potential to resist against federal government for the rights of Baloch people. In 2005 another insurgency started in Balochistan when the government of General Pervez Musharraf took initiative against Nawab Akbar Bugti. This military operation posed a major threat to integrity of state. Musharraf government though initiated different development projects in Balochistan but did not bother to take into confidence the local population regarding these development projects. Balochistan is the backward province of Pakistan. Federal government should socialize people to work for the integrity of Pakistan instead to play in the hands of BLA and other banned organizations. External actors because of internal instability also got an opportunity to intervene in the internal affairs of Balochistan. This province is very important part of Pakistan. Therefore it is deemed necessary to highlight actual concerns of the people of Balochistan through a detailed research project so that appropriate policies can be evolved for strengthening the integrity of Pakistan. The actual problem of Balochistan was very clear, it was the most underdeveloped province of Pakistan which was being ruled by non-Baloch. Nationalist government of Balochistan was interested to mobilize most of the population of Balochistan. Localized tribal interests were threatened by this policy of Nationalist government. Unrest started in Balochistan kidnapping of non-Baloch officials and attacks on settlers became a routine matter. Provincial government found it difficult to manage this unrest and requested federal government for assistance. In Balochistan there are two types of groups which are working for protection of rights of Baloch people. The nationalist Baloch want to protect rights of Baloch through the use of forcible methods against the existing system. They did not want to make any type of discrimination between right and wrong means for securing their objectives. They are being perceived by the system as anti-state elements and system considers legal to use all types of mechanisms to control them. While on the other hand the other group is considered as

moderate Baloch and they want to have authority to manage their affairs themselves according to the 1973 constitution.

(Hashmi, (2015). Baloch want to see Balochistan as prosperous province like other province of Balochistan. Ethnic politics for the protection of a specific ethnicity can have potential to disturb the whole state structure if not being managed by the state system properly. Assertion of Ethnic nationalism in a negative way can create issues for national integration of a country. As one can see Bengali ethnic nationalism had disintegrated Pakistan. Baloch nationalist try to protect interests of people of Balochistan but their coercive measures are considered anti-state by the federal government. Federal government also did apply forcible methods to deal with these anti-state elements. But use of force by anyone had not proved fruitful for managing conflicting situation

## **Conclusion**

Baloch society is having strong tribal structure and Baloch like sardari system. New trends can be observed among new emerging middle class who is more socialized and mobilized group in Baloch society. Federal government should take initiatives to support this segment of the society to create moderate perception regarding central-provincial relationship. Federal government should implement long term policies for the betterment of Baloch so they may not become victim of any external conspiracy. Balochistan is situated on a very sensitive geographical location and various external forces always keep an eye on different internal and regional developments. Internal instability in Balochistan has potential to open door for external interference. External forces can exploit poor Baloch people through giving them money and even weapons to use against state of Pakistan. Law enforcement agencies should deal with Baloch people humanely and with full human dignity. There is a need of time now to adopt a flexible approach to deal even militant groups of Balochistan to take them into confidence. Actually they all are Pakistani nationals and they should be given a due respect by all concerning authorities.

This research paper has identified real issues of the people of Balochistan and provided alternative approaches to build confidence between federal government and people of Balochistan. Misperception and misunderstanding has existed between federal government and Baloch nationalists. This is the need of time to enhance trust level between them so that negative perception can be converted into positive perception and issues can be resolved through available options. Protection of mutual gains can serve the national integration. There should be regular communication between federal government and nationalist groups. In the presence of strong communication links consultation process easily can be secured between the concerned actors.

One very important objective of this research paper was to bring into limelight two very important facts. First is to make clear the misperception which exists in the minds of Baloch that different ethnic identities of Pakistan generally and Punjabi ethnic identity particularly are enemy of Baloch. This misperception has been existing in the minds of Baloch since 1947 and had created so many issues for Pakistan. Second fact is that peace and stability in Balochistan is very crucial for integration of Pakistan. Researcher has highlighted through the research paper actual grievances of the people of Balochistan and did present different recommendations to address the issues on priority basis. The province of Balochistan is very important for unity of Pakistan. Policy makers should initiate various measures to build the existing gap between Baloch ethnicity and rest of the ethnicities of Pakistan. This is very important to enhance the process of national integration of Pakistan.

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decision making process. Federal government should initiate various strategies to socialize Baloch people and a sense of belongingness towards system should be inculcated in the minds of Baloch so they can feel that they are part of main stream and they enjoy authority to resolve their issues by themselves. If they are not being taken into confidence by the federal government they will play in the hands of external actors and pose a threat to the integrity of Pakistan.

There are different bitter experiences during various periods of history since 1947 on the part of people of Balochistan . There is trust deficit between Baloch people, Balochistan government, law enforcement agencies and federal government. Now it is the need of the time to address these issues in the true sense. Balochistan area wise is a largest province with abundant natural resources which can be extracted and utilized in the best interests of whole population of Pakistan. These resources only can be extracted when local Baloch will be satisfied with the system. This is important for federal government to assist Balochistan government to initiate in actual sense developmental projects for the well being of people of Balochistan and now this is necessary for the well being of whole Pakistan.

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